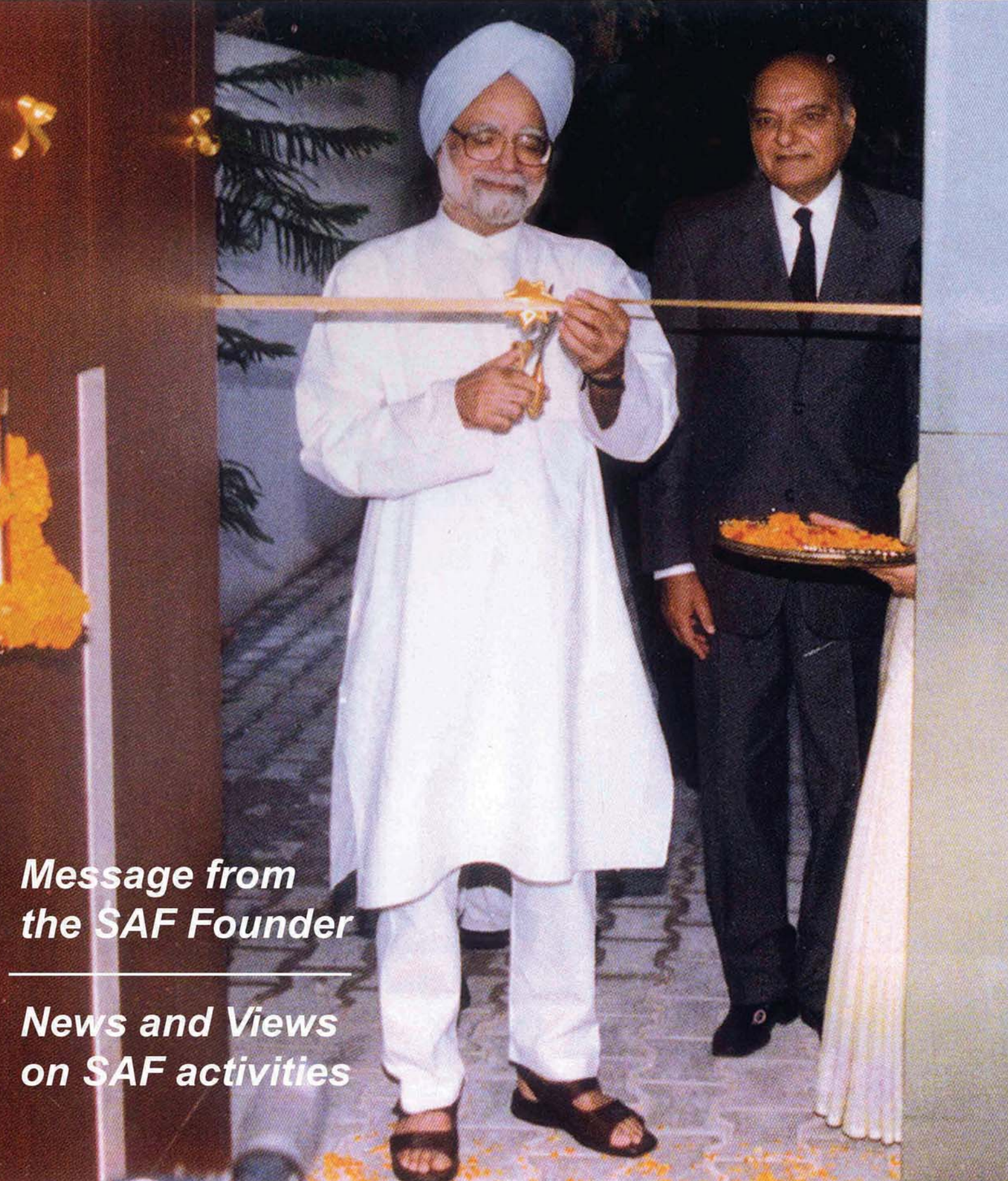




SAF - QUARTERLY



*Message from
the SAF Founder*

*News and Views
on SAF activities*



SOUTH ASIA FOUNDATION (SAF)

The South Asia Foundation (SAF) is a secular, non-profit and non-political organization, which was established in September 2000. Its objective is to uphold its core values of regional cooperation and peace through education and cultural interaction between the eight SAARC countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

SAF has been admitted into official relationship with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and recognized as an Apex Body of South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Its aims, objectives, and activities are in conformity with the spirit, purpose, and principles of the two international organizations.

The South Asia Foundation has blossomed as it was originally grafted on Sumitra Foundation (SF), named after my mother, Sumitra Kaur, and was launched by Dr Manmohan Singh, then the Finance Minister, on 8 January 1995. He also very kindly accepted my invitation to become the chairman of SF, the objective of which was to alleviate poverty through education and family planning. Inaugurating the foundation, Dr Manmohan Singh spoke about the importance of smaller families and protection of the environment, pointing out that “the ecological disaster that resulted from exponentially growing population was as much a consequence of poverty as it was its cause.”

Even after assuming enormous responsibilities as Prime Minister of India, Dr Manmohan Singh continues to support the two foundations. In his introduction to my last book, *The Sasia Story*, published by UNESCO, he wrote: “Since I had the pleasure of inaugurating the Sumitra Foundation, established by Madanjeet Singh in January 1995, I have retained an interest in the work of the two organizations - the Sumitra Foundation and the South Asia Foundation. I have watched as the South Asia Foundation has worked to enlarge the scope and dimension of its activities in search of common cultural, educational and economic denominators to strengthen cooperative initiatives throughout the South Asian region.” Sasia is the name coined for South Asia’s common currency in the hope that, like the Euro, it will become the anchor of economic stability and regional cooperation.

Among the first chairpersons of the Governing Council of South Asia Foundation (SAF) who made significant contributions, I must, in particular, mention Mr Inder Kumar Gujral, the former Prime Minister of India, known for his ‘Gujral doctrine’ designed to bring about a rapprochement between South Asian countries; Dr Kamal Hossain, an internationally recognized advocate of human rights; the late Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka, Mr Lakshman Kadirgamar, who sacrificed his life trying to resolve ethnic conflicts; Mr Lyonpo Sangay Ngedup, former Prime Minister of Bhutan, who is actively promoting his country’s transition from monarchy to democracy; Ambassador Bhek Bahadur and his wife, Dr Rita Thapa,



working in a politically changing Nepal; the indefatigable Prof Salima Hashmi, upholding through art and culture the secular ideals of her eminent father, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, the poet who bravely stood against military dictatorships in Pakistan; Dr S.M. Raheen, Afghanistan’s former Minister for Culture and Information who is trying to repair the damage done to the country’s democracy and cultural heritage by the havoc wrought by Taliban terrorists; Mr Ibrahim Hussain Zaki, a former SAARC Secretary General and Minister of Planning, whose good work as the chairman of the SAF chapter in Maldives was abruptly halted by his dismissal from the government.

Before Mr Gujral retired as SAF-India chairman in 2006, to give way to a younger and dynamic person, Mr Mani Shankar Aiyar, he set the tone for realizing the South Asia Foundation’s cardinal objective of promoting regional cooperation. He strongly counseled that the activities of the organization must necessarily be in conformity with the aims, objectives, and principles of the SAARC charter and that SAF must be decentralized, comprising autonomous chapters to promote and sustain South Asia’s unity in diversity.

Soon after the establishment of South Asia Foundation, Nepal was the first country I visited along with France Marquet, a SAF trustee. Ambassador Nihal Rodrigo, then the SAARC Secretary General, recommended that SAF would do well to start its activities in smaller countries with centralized authority such as Bhutan and Maldives, especially as these countries needed assistance in the field of education.

Accordingly, Thimphu in Bhutan was our next stop where we met with the young Bhutanese Minister of Education, Mr Lyonpo Sangay Ngedup. He received us with open arms and readily became the chairman of SAF-Bhutan chapter. Over the years, he has enthusiastically gone out of his way to promote SAF’s activities, especially in the field of education. The latest outstanding project is the SAARC Forestry Institute; it is in the process of formation in Bhutan and it will be mostly funded by SAF.



In Bangladesh, Dr Kamal Hossain graciously agreed to become the chairman of the SAF chapter and a Trustee of the foundation. He drafted the SAF's secular constitution and recently (on 12 December 2006), signed a MoU between SAF and the South Asian Institute of Advanced Legal and Human Rights Studies, in the process of formation in Dhaka.

I admired Dr Kamal Hossain since I first met him in the early 1970s at the International Conference of Orientalists in Mexico City. As Law Minister in the first government of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, he had drafted the constitution of People's Republic of Bangladesh that proclaimed the four fundamental principles of "nationalism, secularism, democracy, and socialism." Over the years, he has become his country's voice of conscience and a champion of human rights worldwide. He helped Taslima Nasreen, the laureate of the 2004 UNESCO Madanjeet Singh Prize for the Promotion of Tolerance and Non-violence, by securing her protection by the Bangladesh Supreme Court against the threat of Islamic fundamentalists out to kill her for her secular beliefs.

SAF has yet to recover from the severe setback it suffered in 2005, by the dastardly assassination of its chairman in Sri Lanka, Lakshman Kadirgamar. The eminent Foreign Minister was deeply devoted to South Asian regional cooperation and, at the time of his death, was negotiating a peaceful settlement with the Tamil Tigers (LTTE). Since large areas of the country had been devastated by the tsunami, he had proposed a new institutional mechanism for the efficient delivery of the relief supplies for which SAF, too, contributed Rs. 25,00,000/-.

Another calamity that occurred in 2005 was the devastating earthquake that caused widespread death and destruction in the Pakistani as well as the Indian regions across the LoC in Kashmir. SAF again rushed to help and contributed over Pk Rs. 13,000,000/- to Pakistan out of which a sum of over Pk Rs. 6,000,000/- was for the rehabilitation of the SOS village schools in Muzaffarabad. An additional amount of Indian Rs. 50,00,000/- was allocated for the reconstruction of schools destroyed in Uri in the Indian part of Kashmir.

Administrative problems apart, it proved difficult to identify SAF projects, which would effectively promote regional cooperation. In 2002, SAF succeeded in bringing together all the Vice-Chancellors of open universities in SAARC countries to jointly design a Post Graduate Diploma course in Environment and Sustainable Development (PGD-ESD). The cooperative programme was developed in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 19 February 2003. It was completed in record time and launched during the Third SAF General Conference, held in New Delhi on 14 December 2003.

At this meeting it was also decided to strengthen regional cooperation by launching the SAF Madanjeet Singh individual scholarships programme, offering as many as 10,000 stipends annually to students of open universities for a period of three years. In addition, 750 scholarships were allocated to social orphans in South Asian SOS villages, in cooperation with the Kinderdorf International, Vienna.



Ambassador Madanjeet Singh and Mme. France Marquet with Former President of India Late K.R. Narayanan and Late Mrs. Narayanan. Also seen in the picture Afghanistan's Minister for Information and Culture Sayed M. Raheen, Amb. Zaheer Aziz and Francois Langlois, Director, Culture section, UNESCO at Villa Surya, 17 June, 2003.

At the end of three years, a thorough reevaluation of SAF programmes was undertaken at a Special Meeting of the Governing Council and the Trustees, held in New Delhi on 27 November 2006. It showed that even though the jointly created PGD-ESD courses did promote cooperation between the vice chancellors/rectors of the SAARC open universities, they failed to do so among the students. The SAF programme of individual scholarships, too, did not succeed in its objective of creating interaction among students, although the 10,000 scholarships benefited deprived students of open universities and the 750 scholarships helped socially marginalized children in SOS villages.

On the other hand, SAF's cardinal objective of promoting regional cooperation among young people succeeded admirably through the innovative initiative of launching group scholarships programme, developed in 2002, by Mr N. Ram and Mr Sashi Kumar, at the Asian College of Journalism (ACJ), Chennai. It offered full scholarships, including travel, board, and lodging, to students from South Asian countries, selected on the basis of gender equality, to study together in SAF institutions. Another institution that successfully implemented the SAF Madanjeet Singh group scholarship programme was the School of Visual Arts at Beaconhouse National University in Lahore, Pakistan.

Hence, the SAF Governing Council decided to phase out individual scholarships and instead allocate funds only to the group scholarships programmes and projects of vocational training in which boys and girls work together in camps and interact with each other. Since the first SOS vocational training camp was held at Malpotha in Sri Lanka (2003), a number of environmental camps have been organized annually in several SAARC countries with the participation of about forty youngsters. They learn about the enormous economic potential of employing improved methods of agriculture, the importance of organic farming, as well as acquiring professional skills for gainful employment.



So also the SAF Scouts Friendship camps, held annually in cooperation with the Asia-Pacific Regional Scouts Movement, effectively promotes regional cooperation. The first SAF Scout jamboree was held in Bhutan in 2002, with the participation of over 500 scouts and guides, setting the tone with music and dance in an ambient of colourful pageantry. Since then similar friendship camps have been successfully held annually in Maldives, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan. As with the young people who participate in the SOS vocational training camps, the SAF scouts friendship camps inspire the youngsters to develop a remarkable sense of comradeship and solidarity.

The scope and dimension of the SAF Madanjeet Singh group scholarship programme has considerably expanded since SAF decided to fund a number of institutions of excellence in SAARC countries. This was a sequel to the shocking demolition of the colossal fifth-century Bamiyan Buddha idols by Taliban gangsters in Afghanistan. It prompted SAF to offer a million US dollars to the government of Afghanistan through UNESCO in order to restore Afghanistan's rich cultural heritage.

Subsequently, a tripartite agreement for the establishment of the Madanjeet Singh Institute for Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage in Kabul was signed in Paris by UNESCO Director-General Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura, the government of Afghanistan, and myself on March 22, 2004. A war-damaged building in Kabul was restored and Afghanistan's Minister of Culture and Information, Dr. S. M. Raheen, inaugurated the Institute on 13 July 2006. An international faculty of teachers is now being recruited on the advice of two experts, Dr. Tej Singh from the Lucknow Institute for Restoration and Mr. Robert Knox of the British Museum, assigned by UNESCO.

Since then, SAF has signed seven more MoUs to establish institutions of excellence in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, and Pakistan. SAF group scholarships will be allocated to each of these institutions, which would enable students from all the eight SAARC countries to study together. (For details, please see the SAF website: www.southasiafoundation.org.)

SAF has also offered group scholarships for the consideration of the Expert Group, which is laying down the modalities of the South Asian University (SAU) first proposed by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at the SAARC Summit in Dhaka on November 12, 2005. This scholarship programme would benefit students selected by SAU who are admitted to its affiliated universities and institutions in the SAARC countries. As Dr. Manmohan Singh stated: "The people of our subcontinent are at the cutting edge of scientific and technical research and in the front ranks of the knowledge society across the world. Let this become a forum where our academicians, scholars researchers and gifted students, can work together in the service of human advancement."

It is precisely with this objective that the SAF Institute of Kashmir Studies at Srinagar, India, will be opened on May 26, 2008. The focus will be on interaction between the peoples of South Asia and promoting Kashmir's traditional Sufi culture as an

antidote to extremism. *Junoon*, the famous Pakistani Sufi rock band led by Salman Ahmad, will perform on this occasion as also the band of my son Jeet, called the *Singhs*.

Another highlight of the Kashmir functions will be an unprecedented exhibition of South Asian women painters to be opened by Dr. H .B. Ghazanfar, Afghanistan's Women's Affairs Minister, Kabul. It is organized by the chairperson of the SAF-Pakistan chapter, Salima Hashmi, in cooperation with Raharaw Omarzad, Director, and Centre for Contemporary Arts (CCAA), Kabul. The idea germinated in Afghanistan where for the first time in the country's history the women artists of Afghanistan will display their works at the UNESCO Madanjeet Singh Institute of Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage, Kabul.

The lesson that the South Asia Foundation has learned over the years from tough experience is that there is no substitute to human contact and people-to-people interaction. Students at school together make life-long friends. The sharp turnaround that SAF made at its Special Meeting held in New Delhi on 27 November 2006 was, in fact, the second radical change of direction. The first turning point was at the Second SAF General Conference held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 18 February 2003.

Until then, SAF cherished the hope that online e-learning was the panacea for education, since computers had become a part of the life and culture of young people. Hence SAF invested a lot of funds on IT projects, including experiments on transmitting education through WorldSpace satellite, a hand-held gadget called 'Simputer,' and the training of SAF IT coordinators abroad. The euphoria in online education subsided when a number of colleges and universities in the United States and Europe failed in their efforts to offer learning opportunities over the Internet. The most discouraging of these initiatives was the closing down of *fanthom.com*, a US \$ 50 million joint venture of 13 leading universities in March 2003. The story virtually came to an end with the bursting of the IT bubble.

In fact, way back at the very first SAF General Conference in Kathmandu, Nepal, on 12 December 2001, Mr N. Ram, a SAF Trustee, was not enthusiastic about giving too much credence to IT projects in the context of the basic things that needed to be done in South Asian societies. He laid emphasis on the importance of conventional "off-line" education and rightly stated that e-learning online transmissions have a long way to go before they can be effectively used and accepted by the rural communities of South Asia.

It is fortunate that Mr Ram, the eminent Editor-in-Chief of *The Hindu* group of publications, has taken over oversight responsibility for the *SAF QUARTERLY* and that Mr Nishchal Pandey, author of several research papers and books on South Asia, will serve as the Editor of the journal.

Madanjeet Singh
UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador
Founder, South Asia Foundation



Realizing SAF Madanjeet ANM Scholarships In The Poorest Districts of Nepal

Dr. Rita Thapa,
Chairperson (SAF- Nepal)

The donation of 50 SAF Madanjeet Singh ANM scholarships jumpstarted this pioneering partnership training of Assistant Nurse Midwife (ANM) in Nepal from April 2004. The concept of this initiative is founded on the premise that better maternal and child health for the poor is not only an important goal in its own right, but a prerequisite for promoting economic growth and functional communities as pointed by WHO in 2001.

It is expected that such investment would increase the income generating skills of rural women, especially of the *Dalit* and *Janajati* ethnic groups, and at the same time it would contribute to saving the lives of a countless number of mothers and their babies in rural and remote areas. Better survival and better health of mothers and children would contribute to poverty alleviation.



SAF-Nepal Chairperson Dr. Rita Thapa handing over educational materials to Member-Secretary of CTEVT, Nepal.

The main objective of this initiative is to empower women in the poorest six districts of Nepal with ANM scholarships and training. The *Dalit*, *Janajati*, women, rural, illiterate, and landless citizens constitute the poorest of the poor in the country according to the second Living Standard Survey conducted in 2002/03. These scholarships were, thus, invested in the six poorest districts having lowest Human Development Index, namely **Siraha, Ramechhap, Kapilvastu, Mugu, Pyuthan, and Darchula** districts of Nepal.

The partnering institutions in this compact include South Asia Foundation (SAF), Poverty Alleviation Fund of Nepal (PAF), the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT), and the Perinatal Society of Nepal (PESON).

The results have been encouraging. In the first batch, a total of 53 women were recruited and trained at the Jiri Technical School in Dolkha. 80 percent of them were from the *Dalit* and *Janajati* ethnic groups. The first batch graduated in January 2007 and the second batch of 40 ANM students with similar ethnic background from the same six districts is currently undergoing training at the Jiri Technical School.

The driving force for transforming the concept of this initiative to successful action could be attributed to the power of public-private partnerships. The 50 SAF Madanjeet Singh ANM scholarships generated a dynamic synergy among three important partner institutions like CTEVT, PAF and PESON. The main ingredients of such synergistic partnership could be pointed to a) partner's personal and institutional commitment to the shared objective of reaching out to the poor, and b) that each partner did it best by capitalizing on each other's comparative advantages, without stepping in one another's toes. This led to a win-win partnership, the key to the success of this kind of an initiative.

At the same time, this success story has also created a few challenges. Firstly, mobilization of some "seed support" and technical back up to these newly trained ANMs so that they could set up their community based maternal and neo-natal health services in their respective communities in a sustainable way; and secondly ensuring the future career ladder for these ANMs.

Regarding the first challenge, the Poverty Alleviation Fund of Nepal (PAF) has committed to gainfully utilize the services of these ANMs. In fact many of them are already employed by PAF supported community based partner organizations. Similarly, the government has now created ANM posts at the Sub-Health Posts, which could easily deploy these ANMs, especially in these six districts, where no outsider would choose to go. Besides, there are a host of NGOs that had shown interest to deploy these ANMs, especially in these remote districts. With regards to their future career ladder, productive consultation among the concerned partners is in the progress, the prospect of which looks encouraging.

In conclusion, the SAF Madanjeet Singh ANM scholarship is successfully being implemented through win-win public-private partnership. It has successfully empowered women, mostly *Dalit* and *Janajati*, from the poorest six districts of Nepal with income generating and life saving skills, a model that may be worth replicating elsewhere in the South Asian region.



The recently passed out first batch of SAF-Madanjeet Singh scholarship holders for ANM training at Jiri Technical School, Nepal with their certificates.



Other Activities of SAF-Nepal

28 November 2007

Medical equipment and training materials for the trainees of Assistant Mid-wifery course at the Council for Technical and Vocational Training (CTEVT) was handed over by SAF-Nepal Chairperson Dr. Rita Thapa to the Member Secretary of the CTEVT Dr. B.B Jirel. These equipment which include a computer and a printer, a microscope, t.v., dvd and medical equipment useful to students studying mid-wifery at the Jiri Technical School (JTS) was listed out by a taskforce set-up in order to recommend the upgradation of the JTS. Currently the second batch of SAF-Madanjeet Singh scholarship holders are undergoing training at the JTS.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Rita Thapa highlighted the works and activities of the SAF while Dr. Jirel thanked the SAF for this generous collection of training materials. Principal of the JTS Shiva Hari Dhakal and Secretary of SAF-Nepal Nishchal N. Pandey were also present on the occasion.

13 November 2007

A large collection of books were handed over on Nov. 8th by Chairperson of SAF-Nepal Dr. Rita Thapa to the Tribhuvan University, Central Library at a function held in Kirtipur. These books that were donated by UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador Madanjeet Singh on behalf of the South Asia Foundation were handed over to Rector of the University Prof. Dr. Surya Lal Amatya. Also present on the occasion were Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Prof. Dr. Ramesh Raj Kunwar, Head of the Political Sciences Department Prof. Dr. M. Habibullah, Chief Librarian Krishna Bhandary, Secretary of SAF-Nepal Nishchal N. Pandey and a large number of students of the university. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Rita Thapa outlined the activities of the South Asia Foundation in the fields of education and hoped that this collection of books will be useful to the biggest library of the country. Rector Prof. Amatya while thanking SAF for this generous donation hoped

that there will be a continuity of support to the Tribhuvan University from SAF-Nepal. Books that are mostly on South Asian regional cooperation, peace building, memoirs of well known personalities, literature and culture - this collection also includes Jawaharlal Nehru's 'Glimpses of World History' compiled in a single volume.



A large number of books donated by SAF Founder Ambassador Madanjeet Singh was given to the Department of Conflict, Peace and Development of the Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur, Nepal. These books are mainly on regional cooperation in South Asia, peace-building and governance, country-specific books on individual South Asian countries including a copy of the "SASIA Story" authored by Ambassador Madanjeet Singh. They were received by Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University Prof. Dr. Ramesh Raj Kunwar from Mr. Nishchal N. Pandey, Secretary of SAF-Nepal at a function held in Kathmandu on September 26th 2007. Assistant Dean of the Department Prof. Dr. Shishir Subba and other members of the faculty were also present on the occasion.



Books donated by Ambassador Madanjeet Singh to the SAARC Secretariat library being handed over to the then SAARC Secretary General H.E. Chenkyab Dorji in the presence of all the 7 Directors of SAARC by SAF-Nepal Chairperson Dr. Rita Thapa on March 20, 2007.



A Brief Report on South Asia Foundation Documentation and Information Centre (SAFDIC)

Karan Khosla,
Secretary (SAF-India)

Introduction

The South Asia Foundation Documentation and Information Centre (SAFDIC) was inaugurated in 2001 by Dr. Manmohan Singh, the current Prime Minister of India. The aim of SAFDIC is to collect, catalogue and provide easy access to a vast repository of regional knowledge, both in academic and non-academic fields.

SAFDIC houses over 7500 selected volumes on the social and natural sciences, international relations, security, literature, culture, human rights, environment, gender education, health, science and technology, peace studies etc.

The journal and print media section consists of material mostly published in and relevant to South Asia. SAFDIC is a member of the DELNET library network and in order to make information easily accessible, these journals are being gradually digitized.

SAFDIC is located within the SAF-India compound at A-33, Vasant Marg, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi – 110057. The library is open from 9:30 a.m till 6:00 p.m, Monday through Friday (except National Indian holidays). A reading room with Internet and photocopying facilities provides research scholars with a valuable resource; students from local Universities make good use of SAFDIC resources throughout the year.

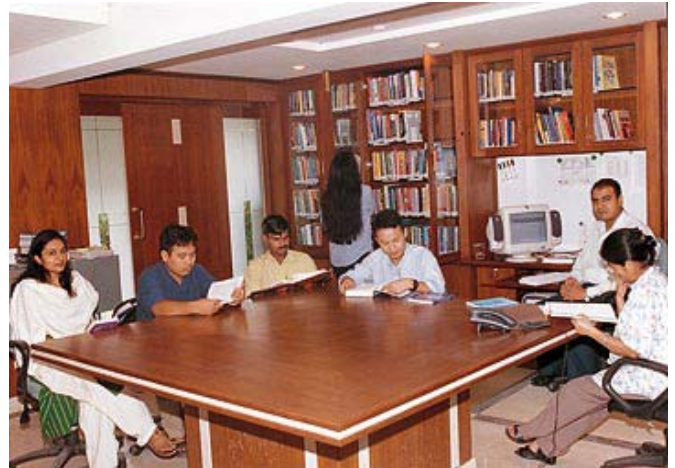
Content

Books

The “Thematic Bibliography” section provides a comprehensive list of major South Asian issues along with the names of institutions working in these fields. In addition, for each of the 7500 books currently available, the SAFDIC website provides relevant data such as the list of contents, publisher and author details as well ISBN numbers for public information.

In 2007, Ambassador Madanjeet Singh presented 455 books to the SAARC Secretariat Library in Nepal; as many of these books had contemporary relevance to South Asian culture and development studies, SAFDIC purchased copies of the same for its holdings in New Delhi. Currently these books are being catalogued and relevant data is being uploaded onto the website.

Members of the SAF community, including the Founder, Chairpersons, and various staff are known to be prolific writers; SAFDIC is currently building a collection of material published or endorsed by Ambassador Singh and others.



A glimpse of students and researchers utilizing the facilities at SAFDIC

Journals

Subscriptions to the fourteen leading journals dealing with matters of art and culture are renewed annually. SAFDIC is a strong supporter of civil society oriented publications such as the “Indian Journal of Youth Affairs” which compiles academic papers dealing in, for example, “Immunization coverage in India: Younger Mothers’ Perspective”, or “Exploring the Indian Student Youth”, subjects which are of relevance to the entire South Asian region.

A more recent publication added to the journal repository is the “Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies” in which the latest issue presents formal case studies on the “Expansion of SAARC: Implications for South Asia” and other extremely important development related topics.

Newspapers, Magazines

No library or documentation centre is complete without an up to date selection of newspapers magazines and other current publications. SAFDIC subscribes to and archives over 16 magazines and 7 newspapers.

The Future

As SAF Institutions of Excellence develop across South Asia, so will documentation and information centers that focus on each institution’s core values and strengths. Discussions are currently underway to determine how to possibly network these institutions and to make digital contents effective, functional and accessible to the masses.

For more information contact: karankhosla@safmail.org



SOS-SAF camps

A Symbol of South Asian Co-operation

Satish Kumar

SOS-Kinderdorf International Asia Office

To boost South Asian regional cooperation and instill the awareness about the significance of environment in youngsters, SOS Children's Villages and South Asia Foundation came together with the Environment Camp. It has been very successful since its inception in 2003 in promoting co-operation, peace and brotherhood among people of South Asia in its own small way.

Known as the Environment Camp it is the outcome of an agreement between SOS-Kinderdorf International and South Asia Foundation (SAF). Taking a leaf out of SOS Farm Project Malpotha in Sri Lanka, both the organizations have agreed to get the youths from the SAF countries together to experience the significance of the environment in a rural ambience. At Malpotha, during vacations, children of SOS Children's Villages of Sri Lanka were made to learn farming techniques. Every Camp emphasises upon understanding the value of working in a cohesive manner towards protection of the environment as well as learning and realization of the dignity of labour. SAF takes care of monetary aspect while SOS Children's Villages provides the facilities and opportunities and all forms of logistical support.



The children from SAARC countries (two boys and two girls from each country and two additional from India) and residents of the project take part in the Camp. The participants come from SOS Children's Villages and from outside too. SOS finalizes the list of participants.



The first camp was held at Malpotha in Sri Lanka in 2003, in which participants worked together in a rural environment and learned about the benefits from protecting the environment and sustainable development.

In the following year, the camp was organized in SOS Youth Village & Farm Project at Bagerhat in Bangladesh where the 28 youngsters learned how important it was to respect ecological principles and live in harmony with nature. Mr. Siddhartha Kaul, Deputy Secretary General, SOS-Kinderdorf International who visited the camp, was very happy to watch the youngsters doing hard work in cohesion, "I am very much sanguine about the Environment Camp, the participants are taking it seriously and with SAF it will go a long way. With successfully hosting the Camp we address the two major issues in the contemporary world- environmental degradation and lack of cooperation among the people", he added.

The third SOS-SAF Joint Environment Camp held in December 2005 was hosted by SOS Children's Village Khajuri Kalan (India). This time the Camp had an additional feature focusing on the needs and care pattern of special child, apart from the regular emphasis on environment and sustainable development. President of SOS-Kinderdorf International Helmut Kutin visited the Camp and encouraged the children. He was very pleased to look at the concept of the SOS-SAF Environment Camp and appreciated the vision of the Founder of the South Asia Foundation Ambassador Madanjeet Singh of promoting people to people contacts so as to further regional cooperation among the South Asian countries.



Some of the Major events and activities of SAF during the year 2007

- International Forum of Civil Societies meeting at the 34th session of the UNESCO general Conference on October 25, 2007.

Ambassador Madanjeet Singh and Mme. France Marquet attended meeting of the programme commission, during the 34th session of the UNESCO General Conference on October 25, 2007. The objective of SAF's participation in the meeting was to formalize UNESCO's Assistance to the following eight SAF institutions of excellence:

UNESCO-Madanjeet Singh Institute for Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage, Kabul.

The South Asian Institute of Advanced Legal and Human Rights Studies, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

The Asian College of Journalism, Chennai, India.

The Institute of Kashmir Studies, Kashmir University, Srinagar, India.

The South Asia Institute of Vocational Training, Kathmandu, Nepal.

The Institute of South Asian Studies, Government College University, Lahore, Pakistan.

The School of Visual Arts, Beaconhouse National University, Lahore, Pakistan.

The SAARC Forestry Institute, Thimphu, Bhutan.

In his address to the delegates at the meeting, Ambassador Madanjeet Singh described the rapid progress made by establishing eight SAF institutions of excellence since the tripartite agreement was signed on March 22, 2004, between UNESCO, the Government of Afghanistan and SAF for the establishment of UNESCO Madanjeet Singh Institute for Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage.

- The 22nd Asia-Pacific Region (APR) Scout Conference, held from 18- 23 October 2007 in Tokyo, Japan.

At the 22nd Asia-Pacific Region (APR) Scout Conference, held from 18-23 October 2007 in Tokyo, Japan, South Asia Foundation was awarded a plaque of recognition for its support to young scouts of South Asia to promote regional cooperation. The theme of this conference was "Advancing towards the new Scouting Century" and the meeting was attended by more than 500 key Scout leaders from 24 member countries of the Asia-Pacific Region.

Mr Khoo Heng Pheng, Chairman of the Asia-Pacific Region Scout Committee, presented the award to Mme. France Marquet, Trustee of South Asia Foundation.





Mme France Marquet informed the conference that SAF is funding US\$ 40,000/- annually to the Asia-Pacific Region of the World Organization of the Scouts Movement. Since 2002, SAF has supported five SAF-Scouts Friendship Camps which are aimed at creating a “youth movement” to encourage person to person contact for peace, progress and regional development and cooperation.

- **Memorandum of Understanding between the South Asia Foundation and the Chief Commissioners of National Scout Organizations in South Asia.**

As cardinal principles of South Asia Foundation (SAF) is in tune with the spirit, purpose and principles of the National Scout Organizations of South Asia; the SAF has helped the Scouts to hold their annual Friendship Camps across the region. Since 2002, SAF-Scout Friendship Camps have been organized jointly so that boys and girls from all the South Asian countries have an opportunity to meet and foster mutual understanding and creative friendship.

The First SAF-Scout Friendship Camp was held in Bhutan from 21-26 February 2002 with the theme of “Regional Cooperation” in which a total of 550 girls and boys from the seven SAARC countries participated. An equally successful Second SAF-Scout Friendship Camp with “Protection of the Environment” as its theme was held in Maldives on 15-22 February 2003. It provided 180 youngsters the rare treat of camping in Feydhoo Finolhu.

Since then, SAF-Scout Friendship camps have been held in accordance with the MOU signed between SAF and the World Organization of the Scout Movement

In accordance with this MoU, Nepal Scouts hosted the Third SAF Scouts Friendship Camp from 21st - 28th April 2005 funded by the SAF.

422 young boys and girls, aged 12 - 26 years old, from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka took part in the camp. Afghan Scouts joined this event for the first time in 23 years. The 4th SAF Scouts camp was held in Sri Lanka while the 5th SAF-Scout Friendship Camp was held for seven days from 4th to 10th June 2007 in Ghora Gali, Murree, Pakistan. With a theme of “Sharing Youth Potential for Development,” it was attended by 244 Pakistani participants and 147 participants from South Asian countries.

AFGHANISTAN

- **SAF Group Scholarships during the year 2007**

SAF-Afghanistan chapter has continued sending students, both boys and girls, to the Asian College of Journalism (ACJ), Chennai, India, and to the School of Visual Arts, Beaconhouse National University, Lahore, Pakistan. During 2007, two students (both males) were sent to ACJ, Chennai, and two students (one male and one female) went to study at BNU, Lahore.

- **SAF Scout Friendship Camp at Murree, Pakistan.**

45 boy scouts from Afghanistan participated in the 5th SAF Scout Friendship Camp in Pakistan from 4 to 10 June 2007. There were 244 scouts from all the South Asian countries. The theme of the camp was “Sharing Youth Potential for development.”

- **UNESCO Madanjeet Singh Institution for Afghanistan’s Cultural Heritage**

Hon. Dr. S. M. Raheen, Minister of Information and Culture, Government of Afghanistan and Chairman of the SAF chapter in Afghanistan, inaugurated the UNESCO Madanjeet Singh Institute for Afghanistan’s Cultural Heritage on July 13, 2007, in Kabul. A tripartite Memorandum of Understanding was signed on 22nd March, 2004, between the UNESCO, the Ministry of Information and Culture of Afghanistan and SAF Founder, Ambassador Madanjeet Singh, for the establishment of Madanjeet Singh Institute for Afghanistan’s Cultural Heritage in Kabul. The SAF has released the first installment of US\$.200,000 for the reconstruction of the building as stipulated in the MoU.

BANGLADESH

- **SAF Group Scholarships during the year 2007**

SAF-Bangladesh chapter has continued sending students, both boys and girls, to the Asian College of Journalism (ACJ), Chennai and to the School of Visual Arts, Beaconhouse National University. During the year 2007, two students (one male and one female) were sent to ACJ and two students (both females) went to study at BNU.

- **SAF Scout Friendship Camp at Murree, Pakistan.**

9 boy scouts and 9 guides from Bangladesh participated in the 5th SAF Scout Friendship Camp in Pakistan from 4 to 10 June 2007.

- **SAF- Madanjeet Singh Individual Scholarships to SOS villages.**

79 SAF- Madanjeet Singh Individual Scholarships were given to the deprived and marginalized orphans, both boys and girls, residing in the SOS villages in Bangladesh.

- **The South Asian Institute of Advanced Legal and Human Rights Studies**

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed on 26th December, 2006, between the SAF Founder, Ambassador Madanjeet Singh and Dr. Kamal Hossain on behalf of the South Asian Institute of Advanced Legal and Human Rights Studies and the Madanjeet Singh Centre for Research on South Asian Law.

South Asian Institute of Advanced Legal and Human Rights Studies (in the process of formation). The Institute will be involved in post-graduate legal education and will offer, in conjunction with BU, post-graduate degrees within its area of expertise. To start with, an LL.M. in South Asian Law and an M.A. in Human Rights and Development may be offered.

The Institute will actively promote research on themes within its area of expertise, which will include legal mechanisms for regional and South Asian integration, comparative studies of South Asian law, unification and harmonization of the laws of the region, and human rights and development.



BHUTAN

- SAF Group Scholarships during the year 2007

SAF-Bhutan chapter has continued sending students, both boys and girls, to the Asian College of Journalism (ACJ), and to the School of Visual Arts, Beaconhouse National University. During the year 2007, two students (both females) were sent to ACJ and three students (two females and one male) went to study at BNU.

- SAF Scout Friendship Camp at Murree, Pakistan.

5 boy scouts and 4 guides from Bhutan participated in the 5th SAF Scout Friendship Camp in Pakistan from 4 to 10 June 2007.

- Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the South Asia Foundation ("SAF") And SAARC Forestry Institute of Excellence.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) dated 2007 between the South Asia Foundation ("SAF") and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Forestry Institute of Excellence, Thimphu, Bhutan (in the process of establishment) set forth the agreement, relating to the implementation and establishment of the Institute. This MoU is drawn up further to the submission to SAF Governing Council a Proposal for the establishment of the Institute in 2007 and a draft five year budget for the Institute and various meetings, discussions and correspondence between the SAF Founder, Ambassador Madanjeet Singh, and the Hon'ble Lyonpo Sangay Ngedup, Chairman of the Bhutan chapter of South Asia Foundation.

The decision to establish SAARC Forestry Institute of Excellence in Bhutan was taken by the Twenty-fifth Session of the Council of Ministers of SAARC held in Islamabad, Pakistan in July 2004 at the recommendation of the Sixth South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation Ministerial Meeting on Environment held in Thimphu, Bhutan from 12-13 June 2004.

The Institute will focus on the following five core programmes:

1. Research and Education
2. Information and Knowledge Management
3. Sustainable Forest Management
4. Mountain Ecology
5. Collaborative Programme

INDIA

- SAF-Madanjeet Singh Group Scholarships

The innovative programme of Group scholarships was first started at the Asian College of Journalism (ACJ), Chennai, in 2002. The scholarships covers the tuition, living and travel costs of the selected students for the duration of the diploma course, gender equality is among the criteria of eligibility. The status of the college has been elevated to that of an institution of excellence, funded by South Asia Foundation (SAF).

SAF-India chapter has continued sending students, both boys and girls, to the Asian College of Journalism (ACJ), Chennai, India, and to the School of Visual Arts, Beaconhouse National



University, Lahore, Pakistan. During the year 2007, two students (one male and one female) were sent to ACJ, Chennai, and two students (one male and one female) went to study at BNU, Lahore.

- SAF Scout Friendship Camp at Murree, Pakistan.

9 boy scouts and 8 guides from India participated in the 5th SAF Scout Friendship Camp in Pakistan from 4 to 10 June 2007.

- SAF Individual Scholarships

In India, the SAF-Madanjeet Singh Scholarship Scheme enables meritorious students from poor and remote areas, scheduled castes/tribes, or/and students who are physically handicapped to pursue higher studies and vocational diplomas through distance learning.

The scholarships are offered through State Open Universities in several states throughout India, which have agreed to partner with the SAF-Madanjeet Singh Scholarship Scheme by entering into an Agreement with the Foundation. It has been SAF's endeavor to keep the SAF Madanjeet Singh Scholarship open and transparent.

Merit and means were the important criteria in the selection of candidates. The founder of the SAF wants the scheme to maintain gender equity.

- Distribution of scholarship cheques have so far been held at the following universities:

- Aligarh Muslim University, U.P.: 28
- Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University, Ahmedabad, Gujarat: 480
- Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University, Hyderabad, A.P.: 1215
- Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, Punjab: 186
- Indira Gandhi Open University (IGNOU): 1169
- Jamia Hamdard, New Delhi: 83
- Karnatka State Open University, Mysore: 2390
- Madhya Pradesh Bhoj Open University, Bhopal: 160



- Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad, A.P.: 455
- Netaji Subhas Open University, Kolkata, West Bengal: 416
- Rajarshi Tandon Open University, Allahabad, U.P.: 239
- Tamil Nadu Open University, Chennai.T.N.: 520
- Vardhaman Mahaveer Open University, Kota, Rajasthan: 285
- Yashwant Rao Chavan Open University, Nashik, Maharashtra: 1980

The total number of scholarships awarded: **9915 scholarships.**

SAF-Madanjeet Singh Individual Scholarships to SOS villages.

197 SAF- Madanjeet Singh Individual Scholarships were given to the deprived and marginalized orphans, both boys and girls, residing in the SOS villages in India. During the year 2007 a total of SAF 323 scholarships were given to the SOS villages in the South Asian region at the cost of US\$ 96,900/-.

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the South Asia Foundation (“SAF”) and the Media Development Foundation (“MDF”), Chennai.

A Memorandum of Understanding dated May 7, 2007 between the South Asia Foundation and the Media Development Foundation (MDF) sets forth the agreements reached between the parties relating to the setting up of the Madanjeet Singh Resource Centre for Journalism Studies at the Asian College of Journalism (ACJ) administered by the MDF in Chennai, India. This MoU is drawn up further to various meetings, discussions, and correspondence between the Founder of SAF, Madanjeet Singh, on the one hand, and the Chairman MDF, Mr. Sashi Kumar, and Trustee MDF, Mr. N. Ram, on the other.

From the allocated SAF funds, the Institute shall annually offer not less than 10 SAF group scholarships based on gender equality (one male and one female scholar from each SAARC country). The full scholarships will cover the cost of travel, tuition, board and lodging, and any other expenditure. The group must necessarily include one male and one female student from Pakistan.

MALDIVES

SAF Group Scholarships during the year 2007

SAF-Maldives chapter has continued sending students, both boys and girls, to the Asian College of Journalism (ACJ) and to the School of Visual Arts, Beaconhouse National University. During the year 2007, two students (one male and one female) were sent to ACJ, Chennai, but they dropped out without finishing their course of study. The two students (one male and one female) went to study at BNU, Lahore.

SAF Scout Friendship Camp at Murree, Pakistan.

9 boy scouts and 2 guides from Maldives participated in the 5th SAF Scout Friendship Camp in Pakistan from 4 to 10 June 2007.

NEPAL

SAF Group Scholarships during the year 2007

SAF-Nepal chapter has continued sending students, both boys and girls, to the Asian College of Journalism (ACJ) and to the School of Visual Arts, Beaconhouse National University. During the year 2007, two students (both females) were sent to ACJ, Chennai, and two students (one boy and one girl) went to study at BNU, Lahore.

SAF Scout Friendship Camp at Murree, Pakistan.

7 boy scouts and 7 guides participated in the 5th SAF Scout Friendship Camp in Pakistan from 4 to 10 June 2007.

SAF- Madanjeet Singh Individual Scholarships to SOS villages.

45 SAF- Madanjeet Singh Individual Scholarships were given to the deprived and marginalized orphans, both boys and girls, residing in the SOS villages in Nepal.

PAKISTAN

SAF Group Scholarships during the year 2007

SAF-Pakistan chapter has continued sending students, both boys and girls, to the Asian College of Journalism (ACJ) and to the School of Visual Arts, Beaconhouse National University. During the year 2007, two students (one male and one female) were sent to ACJ and two students (one female and one male) are studying at the BNU.

SAF Scout Friendship Camp at Murree, Pakistan.

72 boy scouts and 5 guides from Pakistan participated in the 5th SAF Scout Friendship Camp in Pakistan from 4 to 10 June 2007.

School of Visual Arts, Beaconhouse National University (Pakistan).

The first batch of SAF Madanjeet Singh Group Scholarships were offered by the School of Visual Arts in 2003. Since then, students, both girls and boys, were hosted and educated from all the eight SAARC countries. The curriculum not only incorporates traditional areas of fine art and design education but also incorporates emergent technologies available as tools for visual education. The scholarship covers, as in the case of Asian College of Journalism, all expenses which includes travel, boarding and lodging, tuition fees, living expenses.

Memorandum of Understanding between the South Asia Foundation and the Institute of South Asian Studies, established under Government College University (GCU), Lahore.

This Memorandum of Understanding between the South Asia Foundation and the Institute of South Asian Studies (in the process of formation) sets forth the agreements reached between the parties through GC University Lahore – Pakistan relating to the implementation and establishment of the Institute. This MoU is drawn up further to the submission to SAF Governing Council for the establishment of the Institute.



The Institute will be established in GC University Lahore as a centre of excellence for research and education in South Asian Studies. The Institute will be established as a legal entity associated / affiliated with the GC University Lahore.

In conformity with the cardinal SAF objectives of promoting regional cooperation, the Institute will establish itself as a centre of excellence for research and education in South Asian Studies. As the leading institution of its kind, it will undertake teaching and research in its chosen areas.

The Institute will design and undertake research projects and provide financial support to research programmes approved by it. It will offer fellowships to academics and professionals to undertake research on topics relating to South Asian Studies.

The faculty, fellows, researchers and students of the Institute will be drawn from all SAARC countries, so that it acquires a truly South Asian character and can acquire a central position in South Asian cooperation in the fields of research, education, human rights and development in cooperation with the other SAF institutions and centres of excellence.

SRI LANKA

- SAF Group Scholarships during the year 2007

SAF-Sri Lanka chapter has continued sending students, both boys and girls, to the Asian College of Journalism (ACJ) and to the School of Visual Arts, Beaconhouse National University. During the year 2007, one student (female) was sent to ACJ, Chennai, and two students (one boy and one girl) went to study at BNU.

- SAF Scout Friendship Camp at Murree, Pakistan.

14 boy scouts from Sri Lanka participated in the 5th SAF Scout Friendship Camp in Pakistan from 4 to 10 June 2007.

SAARC to collaborate in social science research

Seven members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) will step up collaborative and individual social science research in their countries to help to devise policies on the basis of scientific evidence.

This agreement was arrived at during the second meeting of the Regional Forum of the Ministers of Social Development of the SAARC Region on March 23rd.

Of the view that most of the region paid scant attention to social science research, Ministers from India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka decided to facilitate it and also agreed to recognise the predominant place which needed to be given to social development in line with the Copenhagen commitments on Social Development and its follow-up, the Millennium Development Goals and the SAARC Development Goals as outlined in the SAARC Social Charter. The member-countries also agreed to assist Afghanistan in addressing its special needs in education, technical and vocational training, development of new technologies, protection of disabled persons, protection of children at risk, and control of use of narcotics and drug trafficking.

Tribute to Sheila Bhatia

Renowned theatre personality Mrs. Sheila Bhatia who had written over 20 operas in Punjabi and had also successfully staged all these operas passed away on February 17 creating a void in theatre circles which can perhaps never be filled. Her notable operas include, "Chann Badlan Da", "Heer Ranjha", "Jeevan ki Hai," etc. She also worked as Director of the National School of Drama and the Delhi Art Theatre. With simple presentations and popular dialect and style, her shows became great hits which were enacted on modest make-shift stages. These proved to be pioneering works towards awakening the people to secular ethos and socialism. In fact, early women directors who entered the arena in the 50s like Bhatia had to work as actors, music composers, costume and backstage artistes and even as script writers themselves. Sheila Bhatia was progressive to the core in literary, political, social and cultural spheres and as competent and imaginative as her male counterparts of the time. She pioneered the Punjabi musical largely with the women oriented themes.



After starting out as a teacher of mathematics in Lahore during the pre-Partition days, Ms. Bhatia got involved in the country's freedom struggle. It was her singing talent that later became a medium of expression. Madanjeet Singh recalls how in the lawns of Lawrence garden in Lahore, thousands of people, especially women, would enthusiastically join her in a chorus, clapping hands, as she sang freedom songs she composed. After India's partition, she was among the active members of the Kashmir National Front and mobilized Kashmiri women from all communities to halt the advance of the ruthless tribal invaders from Pakistan who were at the time menacingly advancing towards Srinagar. To compose songs and plays in such precarious surroundings showed her strength of character; the plays she wrote on the spot were staged in a modest theatre in Srinagar.



Reconnecting South Asia- Beginning a new era in Cooperation?

Dipankar Banerjee¹



South Asia has through millennia been a single geo-economic unit, which in the past had enjoyed enormous growth and prosperity. Till the year 1700 AD its GDP was about half the world's total and larger than China's. This was possible because of two principal reasons. First, the people inhabiting the area were industrious, inventive and entrepreneurial. Second, the region was integrated within and linked to the world, facilitating trade and commerce that brought the world's gold and silver from the 'new world' to purchase its cotton, spices and other manufactured goods of that era. Sadly, today the region remains splintered, confrontational rather than cooperative within, not linked collectively to the world, and unable to exploit the enormous human and material resources of the region for all round development.

The last SAARC Summit held in Delhi in April 2007 attempted to change that. Apart from the perennial issues of peace and development in the region, the focus was on developing greater 'connectivity'. The deliberations among heads of states and government proved highly successful and led to a Summit Declaration that looked forward to the future. As the host of the conference, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India, summed up this document as providing the SAARC; *".....a wider mandate to promote peace and development in our region, including through greater connectivity – in trade, in the movement of people and through the flow of ideas..... We stand today at the crossroads of historic change and opportunity. I believe that this Summit has given us the hope that we can live in peace and amity and the confidence that we can make SAARC work."*

The next Summit in Colombo in Aug. 2008 is likely to take this process forward. To understand the challenges and the potential of connectivity in SAARC a regional seminar was held in Delhi in January 2008 with the participation of eminent South Asians to develop a citizen based initiative. The conference was held at New Delhi on Jan 15-16 and titled, "SAARC: Towards Greater Connectivity". It was organized by the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies in collaboration with the India International Centre and supported by the Korad Adenauer Stiftung.

Connectivity is about more than developing complementary physical infrastructure. It is about promoting trade and commerce within the region and outside. It is about the movement of people and it is also the flow of ideas that are not restrained by artificial man made borders. It is about providing synergy through collective cooperation in utilizing optimally our common physical and human resources.

Yet, in an era of new nationalisms in South Asia, there are some fundamental challenges that need to be overcome. First, is the challenge of countering the disruptive forces in one country from spilling over to the next or to find refuge or sanctuary to pursue their heinous crimes. Globalisation's freedom of cross border movements must not become a licence for the passage of unwelcome guests. Preventing the movement of terrorists, smugglers and criminals must be the concern of each country and a prime responsibility for a nation where they are based to deal with effectively. Second, is the challenge of providing a 'level playing field' for economic cooperation. Obviously, the less advanced will need longer periods for readjustments and greater support and legitimate extensions for the time frame of implementation. At the same time this must not be an excuse for delay. Third, there has to be an acceptance that the region's resources are best optimized for everyone's gain through collective but equitable development and through free and open access to movement to and through each nation's territory. Formidable mental obstacles have been acquired over decades preventing this and hence will require considerable effort to overcome. Yet, the advantages that will accrue to all if this were to be feasible is enormous.

Connecting Regional Infrastructure

Historically, in most regions, borders are normally the most advanced. They are often a link to an outside world providing larger opportunities for trade and commerce and movement of goods and ideas. In South Asia these are dead ends leading nowhere, as cross border legitimate movements are enormously complex and difficult. These are areas where again mainly criminal activities thrive. This has to change and soon. There is no reason why goods from Bhutan and Nepal cannot be moved in sealed trucks without hindrance to Bangladesh. Or, why train loads of material cannot move from Bangladesh to Pakistan, or from India and other SAARC countries to Afghanistan by road. Once this concept of integrated road connectivity is accepted, there is no reason why a road bridge cannot connect India and Sri Lanka, which has the potential to bring an end to the conflict in the latter's north east.

The prospect for rail connectivity is equally significant. There is no reason why a single rail system should not connect the entire South Asian landmass linking Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Pakistan in the first phase and then to Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Myanmar in the next phase to Southeast Asia. This will complete a South Asian rail network, just as Europe does today. Air connectivity today is even more important than in the recent past for facilitating people to people movement. The dramatic rise in air travel in India has demonstrated its potential. It is no longer a means for the well

¹ Director and Head of the Delhi based Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS), a South Asian think tank devoted to peace and cooperation.



off citizens and business people to travel, but serves a common purpose in line with that in the rest of the world.

Movement of People

For a region with the highest numbers and density of people it is a pity that it also remains the most difficult to access across borders. This restriction is often a reflection of security concerns. Two issues are important to overcome this constraint. First is effective verification measures to ensure that undesirable elements do not exploit this opportunity. The second, is the need to streamline measures to facilitate movement.

The Flow of Ideas

The final aspect of connectivity is through the flow of ideas, which probably is the most important. It is only through free flow of ideas that mental obstacles preventing connectivity can be overcome. This can happen when we share our

education systems, throw these open to the region, facilitate collaboration in research and other such possibilities. With today's technology it is not necessary always to provide physical access. This has actually transformed India in several ways in recent years and its effects are fairly dramatic. The wide diversity of India no longer affects cooperation across religions, castes and the like as people who work and share experiences together do not develop an image of 'the other' which can sometimes lead to antagonisms. A similar possibility exists as well for the entire region as a whole.

Ultimately what is it that will be required to make this vision of a connected South Asia really possible? Two points readily come to mind. One, is a vision of a cooperative and prosperous South Asia well formulated and clearly articulated to resonate with the masses. The second is a dynamic regional leadership at multiple levels to carry this idea forward at multiple levels. It is time that the region that is till now the most splintered becomes once again a single economic space.

An Experience with the Lahori Bachchey

Vidha Saumya

Flash! Flash!! Flash!!! So what was your experience in Lahore? How did you come up with the idea of children? What do you think of the art scene in Pakistan? Very refreshing? Very impressive! You could have done better. Oh no! I wanted that drawing!

I couldn't believe all that my eyes and ears were witnessing on the 21st of February 2008. All the hard work had finally paid off. 16 out of 25 drawings got reserved on the day of the opening. My excitement knew no bounds.

It was funny that till the time of the opening I felt nothing, but as soon as I had changed into the new white Kurta to shine for the evening, I felt butterflies entering my stomach and then they just stayed. I couldn't contain all the attention and appreciation that flowed in my direction.

Madame Salima Hashmi walked in to inaugurate the opening; her timing was perfect since a lot of crowd had gathered by then. She was requested by Mathieu Pinel, Director of Alliance Francaise to give a talk on the occasion. As usual it was a lovely little speech with equal importance given to everyone related to the occasion, and very flattering words for me and Alliance Francaise. What could have brought me more happiness? I thought to myself. Yes, I surely missed my parents and my friends and wished my parents to be around and see how I had created a little space for myself in a new country.

Talking about a new country and new city, I must say that it has been more than lovely staying here. The soft-spoken tone of the people, the salwar kameez and the beautiful women are just some obviously noticeable features of Lahore. However Lahore's richness lies in its people, its architecture and its history. All these factors keep adding to the character of the city. My attempt is to experience this richness, to assimilate

all of it inside me and to give my response. "Lahori Bachchey" (as the exhibition was called) was my second successful attempt.

Two newspapers published an article on the exhibition. David Alesworth, Faculty member at BNU and a well known art critic said, "The work is a quickie, but interesting. All the work is done in gray scale and the drawings look like specimens. The time and place as the title give them a photographic look." Prof. Hashmi said, "The works are like vignettes. Each picture tells a separate story and they have the potential to be developed into a complete story. The drawings are like mosaics that combine to make a series telling an elaborated story of a city through its children."

I feel content and happy and I fall short of words to thank Ambassador Madanjeet Singh, Founder of the South Asia Foundation and Prof. Hashmi herself of the Beaconhouse National University for giving me the opportunity to come to Lahore and be able to see for myself why it is said, "Jisne Lahore nahin dekha, samjho who janma hi nahin."





SAARC: In Perspective

Nihal Rodrigo¹

India's External Affairs Minister, Shri Pranab Mukherjee, described the 14th Summit Declaration of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) as underlining the "collective vision of an interconnected South Asia where there is a free flow of goods, services, people and ideas." Connectivity is a vital imperative for South Asia's future. Its acceptance at the highest political levels in the region, as an essential component in South Asia's development, needs now to be invested with practical content. Let me give a few points placing SAARC in contemporary perspective, both within our region and beyond.

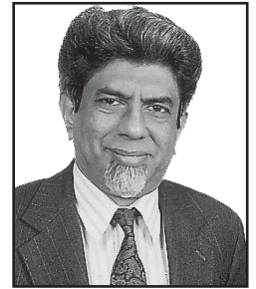
Firstly, **asymmetries abound within and among South Asian states.** At the last SAARC Summit, Sri Lanka President H.E. Mahinda Rajapaksa described South Asia as "a region of contrasts...with significant disparities in Gross Domestic Product, income levels, national resources and population." When the idea of creating SAARC was being discussed in conceptual terms in the early 1980s, some in India pondered whether there might be a "ganging-up" against her. Elsewhere in the region, as one journalist rather harshly put it, India's "towering" presence was seen threatening her "cowering" neighbours in South Asia. Asymmetries, whether in size or political, economic strength, need to be acknowledged and be placed in perspective with a sense of realism, as Shri Inder Kumar Gujral approached the question many years ago in what was known as the "the Gujral Doctrine". Indian Prime Minister H.E. Manmohan Singh, at the last Summit, expressed India's readiness "to accept asymmetrical responsibility." Specifically, through SAFTA, India is willing to open her markets to member-states categorized as Least Developed Countries (LDC), without insisting on reciprocity. Already, India's aviation policy enables Sri Lankan Airlines to enjoy extensive landing rights in India – indeed the largest network of air-links into India made available to any airline in the world. This constitutes a practical measure of "asymmetrical responsibility" which also boosts connectivity in a number of fields including tourism, corporate activity, people-to-people contacts and so on.

Secondly, **bilateral political issues** which have had a baneful impact on regional cooperation, are now being muted, if not yet completely settled. Shared borders and the "Pangs of Proximity", to borrow S.D. Muni's phrase, have sometimes been painful and have often negated economic and political connectivity. Long-standing bilateral issues, including territorial disputes are now being addressed in a spirit of mutual restraint through composite and other dialogues. These enable movement on long-stalled economic and other cooperation. The emerging atmosphere will be more conducive than in the past in helping SAARC to change gear, from a largely declaratory stage, to move forward across long-planned, untravelled road-maps towards steady regional development.

Thirdly, there is also **the dark side of connectivity** in the region. Terrorism has its global as well as regional impact. It has developed its own deadly, insidious connectivity across South Asia and beyond and needs to be firmly confronted. Peace, security and stability are essential to develop the full advantages of connectivity in the region.

¹ Former Secretary General of SAARC

Effective measures are now required to implement the provisions of related SAARC Conventions against terrorism, arms-smuggling, the narcotics trade, human trafficking, and illegal financial transactions. It is essential that SAARC states enact enabling domestic legislation to give practical effect to obligations under these Conventions. There are also thirteen International Conventions and Protocols aimed at combating diverse manifestations of terrorism. South Asia needs to work on common approaches for their implementation. Sri Lanka chairs the UN Ad Hoc Committee on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism, which is now working on a Comprehensive Convention on Terrorism. Following India's initiative for a Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters, and the Meeting of Home Ministers held last month, Sri Lanka will be hosting the 2nd Meeting of SAARC Legal Advisors in April this year. The Meeting will seek to advance work on a mutual legal assistance regime which would also cover international criminal activities abetting terrorism. Connectivity in South Asia should not be subverted by terrorism.



Fourthly, despite its diversity and rich potential, **South Asia, as a region, cannot develop in isolation.** Some members of SAARC did have reservations in the past about opening up to even the rest of Asia, let alone the world beyond. There was an understandable sense that SAARC member-states needed first to consolidate themselves within the Association before reaching out beyond South Asia. Self-confidence has now accrued and built up in SAARC. The last Summit, following years of careful consideration, was happy to associate, as Observers in SAARC, China, Iran, Japan, the European Union, the Republic of Korea and the United States. SAARC has had, of course, some limited economic links with ASEAN, Canada, European Union and Japan, as well as collaboration with several UN agencies. These were however not extensively developed. Observer status in SAARC, now accorded to States and others mentioned must be followed by careful, candid consultations to explore deeper, mutually beneficial links with them, including where possible on strategic issues such as anti-terrorism.

SAARC permits projects to be undertaken where at least 4 member states participate without objections from the others. Projects with Observer participation could, I suggest, be considered on the same basis. The proposed Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipe-line project as well as highway and other infrastructure projects could, for example, be considered in this light.

Much is currently being projected on the "rise of Asia" in this century. Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Aso San, at the last SAARC Summit, called it "not a new rise, but a great comeback of a region." Cultural connectivity and historic links between South Asia and the rest of Asia certainly provide a basis for building closer cooperative initiatives despite some lingering historical legacies still to be resolved.

Fresh perspectives provide opportunities for SAARC, in careful conjunction with Observers, for example, to take effective



positions on global issues commonly affecting us. This is, however, a more complex process than might appear as SAARC itself needs to consult more fully to develop pragmatic positions amongst its own membership on critical global issues. The SAARC Declaration on Climate Change adopted at the 29th Session of the Council of Ministers last month indicates what could be developed in respect of other global issues such as those before the World Trade Organisation and other multilateral bodies. In Beijing, according to news reports, India and China have discussed the post-Bali agenda which augurs well. SAARC has already resolved to work in collaboration with international agencies in the crucial areas of water resources and flood control, energy, food supplies and the environment.

Fifthly, we need to expand South Asian cooperation and **connectivity beyond the State sector**. There were political constraints, largely of a bilateral nature, that SAARC underwent some time during the years that I happened to be Secretary-General of the Association. There then developed, perhaps as a sort of compensatory reaction, increased activity and cooperation among South Asia's non-State actors – the corporate sectors; professional associations such as the medical, legal, architectural, town planners, accountants and others; civil society; the media; cultural groups and the vital Track II processes. The corporate sector, for example, through the SAARC Chambers of Commerce and Industry (SCCI), provided practical inputs to the process of regional trade facilitation. In addition there developed close encounters of the profitable kind among the various national Chambers.

Track II initiatives, as a parallel process, have provided inspirational spurts to SAARC. However, no effective formal institutional mechanisms have evolved to routinely provide for recommendations of these parallel tracks to be fed into SAARC decision-making processes. Parallel tracks in geometry never meet however long they run. However, the Track II recommendations need to interact more directly with state mechanisms and develop some institutional connectivity with them.

With respect to the implementation of the SAARC Social

Charter, the New Delhi Summit has directed designated National Coordination Committees to formulate concrete programmes and projects to complement national (meaning State) implementation efforts. This underscores the need to mobilize civil society to play a more active role in implementing the Social Charter which, in fact, they helped draft. Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Hon. Ratnasiri Wickramanayaka launched the country's Action Plan last month culminating what he called "an open, transparent and broad-based participatory process." Such participatory processes proceeding in the region will also strengthen connectivity between states and civil society.

Similarly, a number of professional organizations, civil society and cultural groups with region-wide membership and reach have been "recognized" as SAARC Apex Organisations. Last month, coinciding with the meeting of the Council of Ministers in New Delhi, a Folklore Seminar-Festival was organized by an Apex body, the Foundation of SAARC Writers and Literature in association with the Indian External Affairs Ministry and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations. Apart from the academic exchanges among South Asian Folklore specialists, the Seminar-Festival provided New Delhi's public, on four consecutive evenings, with spectacular displays of authentic folk culture from across South Asia. The event revealed the deep foundations of people's culture and its rich oral traditions, folk crafts, dances, rituals and practices. It served to also demonstrate the multi-dimensional layers of cultural connectivity extending throughout the region.

My sixth and final observation is perhaps the most challenging aspect of connectivity – one which has escaped many millions of people in South Asia. I refer to the **deeper connectivity that still needs to be established between millions of the powerless poor and the current economic processes** which have brought undeniable progress to the region. Ultimately, this reflects the serious discrepancy evident within SAARC countries between progressive prosperity and demoralizing deprivation. Traditional social inequalities are being aggravated and compounded by a lack of wide spread economic opportunities. The gap is large between heady, rapid economic development as expressed in impressive growth statistics on the one hand and, on the other, slow, even stagnant areas of human development.

SAARC Snippets

Minister of State of Commerce of India Jairam Ramesh paid a three-day visit to the Maldives at the end of January 2008 as part of his drive to expand trade and investment ties within SAARC. The visit assumed significance in light of the SAFTA Ministerial meeting in New Delhi on March 1 and 2. Ramesh's visit was to explore how India can expand its trade and investment presence in Maldives, a country of great strategic significance to it. Fisheries is one important area for bilateral cooperation that was discussed during his visit. Pointing out that Maldives was one of the outstanding economic success stories of the past 3 decades with 7 percent GDP growth and a per capita income in the region of US \$ 3,000, Mr. Ramesh said India had to see how it could go beyond trade to investment and cooperation in diverse areas.

The National Council of Educational Research and Training organized a SAARC seminar on 'School Curriculum: Policies, Practices and Educational Issues Among SAARC Nations' on Jan. 27, 2008 in New Delhi. Representatives of all SAARC nations actively participated in the deliberations. The focus of the seminar was directed on the instrumentality of curriculum and its related policies and programs to enhance quality of

school education in South Asian countries that share a common culture amid their diversities both within the countries and in the region.

The SAARC Genderbase was launched by SAARC Secretary General Chenkyab Dorji on Jan. 17, 2008. It includes both tangible and intangible primary indicators such as a tabulation of existing empowerment strategies along with their impact for determination of future strategies more effectively. It also has detailed analysis of good practices to empower women and end gender discrimination and gives a comprehensive account on the progress of South Asian women.

Joint Secretary (SAARC) at the Indian Ministry of External Affairs Dr. Kheya Bhattacharya has informed that the names of 3 persons for the post of interim CEO of the South Asian University (SAU) to be located in Delhi have been short listed and put before the inter-governmental steering committee for approval. She was speaking at the regional conference on 'SAARC: Towards Greater Connectivity' organized by the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS) in New Delhi on Jan. 18, 2008. Work on the SAU is expected to begin by 2009.



Music transcends religion and culture

Madanjeet Singh¹

“Music has no religion – like water, air and fire – and it connects the world, rather than divide,” declared Salman Ahmad, founder of the Sufi-rock band of Pakistani musicians. He denounced the culture of intolerance and asserted that his music has been enriched because he worked with renowned musicians throughout the world. A devotee of the Islamic mystical tradition of Sufism, Salman believes in humanity’s oneness with the divine, and has furthered that vision in his lyrics by making the Junoon band a voice for peace and international understanding. Like the Bhakti-Sufi music patronised by Khwaja Moinuddin Chist who founded the Chistiyya order in Ajmer, India, Junoon invokes the necessary ideological support to Salman’s musical mission to bring about emotional integration of the people worldwide.

The multicultural and pluralist culture of India, which became a catalyst for the interaction between the traditional and modern music of today, may be credited to a number of male and female Bhakti saints – Mahavira, Kabir, Chisti, Nanak, and Mirabai, among others – poets and musicians from all walks of life and religions. With the advent of Vedanta (end of the Vedas), also called the Upanishads, during the 10th-11th centuries, the intellectual basis for the Bhakti (devotion) movement was mainly provided by the great Hindu theologian and philosopher, Ramanuja. Several, often contradictory, schools of thought arose, representing an unprecedented diversity in beliefs spanning monotheism, polytheism, and atheism. In the Nyaya-Sutras, the overwhelming focus is on rational and scientific thinking and analysis that emphasises human understanding as natural phenomena and physical processes occurring in nature.

However, it was not until Khwaja Moinuddin Chist (AD 1141-1230) arrived in India and promoted music and dance in centres called *khanqah* that a new composite culture of syncretism began to develop. Chisti skillfully combined the notions of Bhakti devotion with Sufi mysticism in order fully to assimilate India’s multicultural plurality. These cultural centres gradually developed into *gharanas*, a system of social organisation in which groups of musicians are linked by lineage or apprenticeship and who adhere to a particular musical style. The *gharanas* also served as the cradle of Indian classical music. The *phirat* or ‘free run’ of the classical music, *Raag*, was devised and sung for the first time by Ustad Bade Mohammad Khan at the Gwalior *gharana*. Another stalwart, Ustad Mubarak Ali Khan, is credited with the invention of *dohri* or *dugun ki phirat*.

The interfaith lyrics Guru Nanak Dev (1469–1539) composed were based on both his Hindu and Muslim mentors – Kabir, Namdev, Ravidas, and Sheikh Farid. Sikh tradition has it that at the age of 30 Nanak Dev would say no more than repeating:

¹Madanjeet Singh, diplomat and philanthropist, is a UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador and Founder Trustee of the South Asia Foundation.



“The Singhs” Group consists of:- Mahendrajeet Singh (centre), Peter Parcek, Robert Francis Toomey, John T. Koehler Jr., Marc Edward Hickox and Stephen Douglas Scully.

“There is no Hindu. There is no Muslim.” Accompanied by Mardana, a Muslim rabab player, and another colleague Bala, a Hindu, Nanak traveled extensively in India and abroad as far as Mecca and Baghdad.

Today Ravi Shankar embodies this marvellous tradition. He was born into a Hindu Brahmin family in Bangladesh and studied under Allaudin Khan (1862–1972), the founder of the Maihar *gharana* of Indian classical music. Ravi Shankar married his guru’s daughter, the sister of Ali Akbar Khan, a famous player of sarod. The Indian sitar is said to have been invented by Amir Khusrau (1253-1325), a devotee of the Chistiyya order, after the Persian ‘Setar’, from the saz group of musical instruments. The international cultural connotation is also evident from the Persian musical ensemble, rabab, sarod, sarangi and tabla, which became an integral part of South Asian musical instruments.

In Bangladesh, Ravi Shankar was inspired by the Baul tradition that is a unique heritage of Bengali folk music. Bauls are wandering minstrels and itinerant singers who do not belong to any religious denomination. The lonely Baul roams places, trying endlessly to find his identity through music, devotion, and love. Their songs invoke traditions that can be interpreted as a revolt against the conventions and bindings of established religions. They believe that the ‘spirit’ does not reside in an unknown heaven but instead can be traced within us through love and compassion for one other. In the Proclamation issued by UNESCO in 2005, Baul traditional songs were included in the ‘Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.’

Aware of the growing threat of Islamic fundamentalism to the Bengali secular folk and classical music, Ravi Shankar, together with his friend George Harrison, organised ‘The Concert for

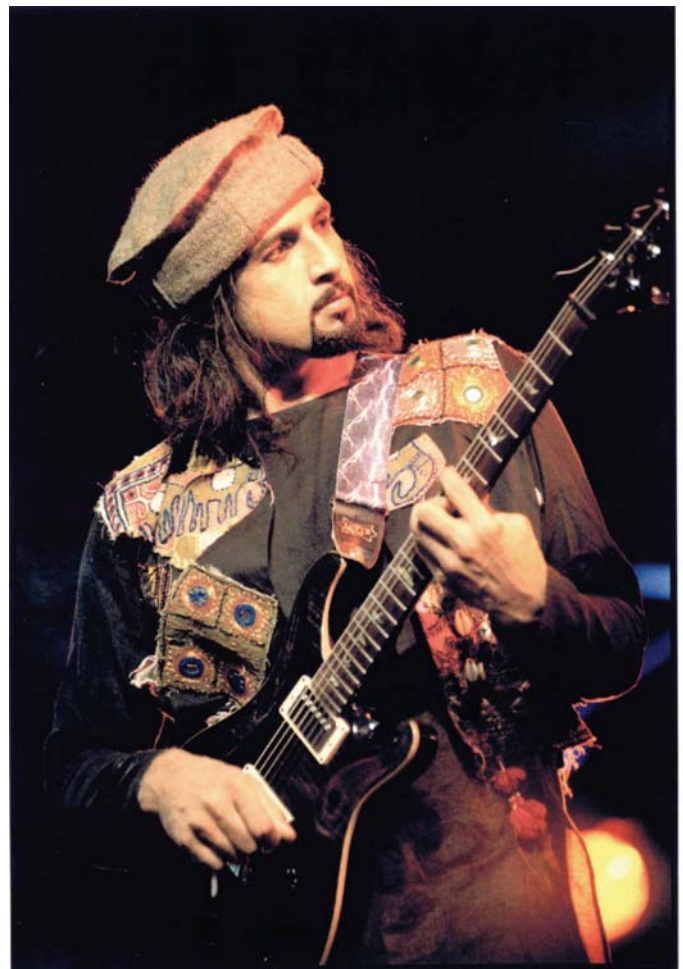


Bangladesh' at the United Nations headquarters in 1971. He also played with Yehudi Menuhin and attempted to synchronise South Asian and Western music, as Salman's band Junoon is doing at present alongside international artists like Alicia Keys, Melissa Etheridge, and Annie Lennox.

Supporters of the Taliban and other Islamic extremists groups consider music to be their main enemy. They have attacked music-related shops and cultural institutions. DVD and CD shops were banned and became the targets of hardcore militants' homemade bombs. They championed General Zia-ul-Haq's Islamist legacy of fundamentalism in Pakistan. The military dictator tried his best to suffocate Pakistan's traditional Sufi culture by emulating Saudi Arabia's Wahhabi Islam. He banned all forms of cultural activities, including figurative painting, singing, dancing, and music, categorising them as blasphemous. The extremity of his Islamic fanaticism is shown by his ban on the staging of the all-time classic 'Heer Ranjha' in Pakistan by the renowned freedom fighter and theatre personality, Sheila Bhatia, and her troupe. The ban was on the ground that "Islam does not permit a show where Heer would be enacted by a woman."

The most effective harbingers of sanity today are the secular artists increasingly stepping forward to uphold the multicultural ideals. Several groups in the genre of Sufi-rock groups have recently sprung up in South Asia. The band of Pakistani singer Abrar-ul-Huq was cheered and applauded by young people at Trafalgar Square in London as he sang to a massive crowd. Falu, a Bombay-born singer whose vocal style complements a mix of Indian classical and alt-rock, like Jeet's band, The Singhs, that combines rock with Indian music. The Singhs (then known as Dragonfly) "opened" a concert of the well-known Canadian rock star, Bryan Adams, in Bangalore to a crowd of over 40,000 people and later shot a music clip to Jeet's song "The Holy Rollers", decrying the control of religious leaders over their people. Jeet is now collaborating with one of France's biggest rock guitarists, Louis Bertignac, and wrote with him an anti-war song called "Still They Die Young". The Singhs have also begun to collaborate with Julian Lennon, son of the famous Beatle John Lennon.

In 2006, the South Asia Foundation (SAF) invited 40 performing artists from the eight SAARC countries – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka – who put up a spectacular show at UNESCO House in Paris on the theme, *Oral and Intangible Heritage of South*



The Junoon Group comprises of:- Dr. Samina Ahmad-Manager, Salman Ahmad (vocalist, lead guitar), Pandit Samir Chatterjee (tabla), Sandeep Jain (Sunny)- drums, Hasnain Alam and Syed Ishtiaq Ahmed

Asia. India's foremost ghatam player, Vikku Vinayakaram, and the famous Sufi singer from Pakistan, Saeen Zahoor, were clamorously applauded. Zahoor learned *kalams* of poets like Bulleh Shah and lyrics of Rumi from his guru, the Indian Sufi Ustad Raunka Ali of Patiala. Born and raised in Okara, a village, Zahoor became a 'street singer' performing for decades at Sufi dargahs, shrine, and festivals in Pakistan and India. The international community discovered him in 1989, when he performed his first concert on stage, and he is now world-famous.

The highlight of the opening of the Institute of Kashmir Studies in Srinagar on May 26, 2008, will be a performance by Junoon, led by Salman Ahmad, and the Singhs band of Jeet Singh. They do not subscribe to the notion of "art for art's sake." Junoon recently performed at the Nobel Ceremony in Oslo, in honour of the winners of this year's Nobel Peace Prize, Al Gore and Rajendra Pachauri. The acoustic Sufi music concert was dedicated to the lawyer's movement in Pakistan, the restoration of the Supreme Court judges, and the independence of the judiciary. Junoon's music is an antidote against religious extremism and terrorism and a landmark in support of Pakistan's civil society, media, students, and rights activists who have heroically protested against authoritarianism. Salman Ahmad was designated a UN Special Representative for HIV Aids — among the worthy campaigns that western rock stars





as Sting, Bono, Bob Geldof and actors such as George Clooney and Brad Pitt, are supporting against poverty, disease, vanishing rainforests.

As a prelude to the shape of things to come, more than a million people participated on the eve of Pakistan's recent general elections in the commemoration at Pakpattan village of the anniversary of a Sufi saint from the Punjab. Waleed Ziad, a Pakistani economist who attended the feast, described the pageantry of dance, poetry, music, and prayer. He noted that religious life in Pakistan has traditionally been synonymous with the gentle spirituality of Sufi mysticism, the traditional pluralistic core of Islam. Even in remote rural areas, spiritual life centres not on doctrinaire seminaries but on Sufi shrines. Recreation revolves around ostentatious wedding parties, Hollywood, Bollywood, Lollywood, and Pollywood in the North West Frontier Province.

'Peshawar Spring' is how the people of NWFP have jubilantly called the victory of the secular and liberal Awami National Party, founded by Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. "We Pushtuns are the children of Badshah Khan's progressive thoughts and ideals," declared Asfandiyar Wali Khan, a grandson of the 'Frontier Gandhi,' as thousands of people took to the streets and bazaars, dancing Punjabi Bhangra and playing local Pashtun folk music. Thousands of bus drivers once again slipped cassettes or CDs into the stereos of their decorated vehicles.

Indeed, fundamentalist and archaic politicians are barking up the wrong tree. Never ever has any obstruction or suppression of culture stopped the arts and music from transcending national boundaries. Nor is there any question of this happening in a globalised world of new technologies, the market economy, individualism, diversity, pluralism, and mobility – the markers of 21st-century life.

Courtesy: The Hindu

All ACJ Students Get Job Placements in the Media

All the 112 students of the 2008 batch at the ACJ, Chennai have been placed in reputed media organisations across Print, Broadcast and New Media.

Campus placements at the ACJ began on April 1, 2008 and even within a couple of days the heavy demand for ACJ-ites in the profession was obvious. By the week ending April 5, a majority of the students already had multiple job offers and were in the enviable position of having to choose from the rival companies - all in the top league - wooing them. As faculty in charge of placements Prof. Sampath Kumar put it, "It was like a tsunami wave".

The rest were snapped up over the next few days. By April 10, only 6 students were left uncommitted, not for lack of offers, but because they were continuing to weigh their options.

On the other hand, six major media organisations had to be requested to cancel their scheduled visits to the campus over the succeeding days because there were no students left to recruit.

Among the early recruiters were *The Hindu*, *Times of India*, *Economic Times*, *Mint*, *Hindustan Times*, *Indian Express*, *New Indian Express*, *DNA*, *Telegraph*, *Reuters*, *UTV*, *Times Now*, *CNBC*, *CNN-IBN*, *TV 19*, *NDTV-Profit*, *NDTV-Metro*, & *IDG*.

The *Times of India* group is the single biggest recruiter and *The Hindu* holds the record for offering the highest entry level salary this year.

Exhibition of Afghan women painters at the Madanjeet Singh Institute of Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage, Kabul, May 7th 2008.

On January 9, 2008, Hon. Dr. H.B.Ghazanfar, Afghanistan's Minister of Women Affairs called a meeting at Ministry of Women Affairs, Kabul, to discuss the modalities of arranging an exhibition of women painters of Afghanistan at the Madanjeet Singh Institute of Afghanistan Cultural Heritage, Kabul. The following officials were present:

H.E. Dr. S. M. Raheen, Ambassador of Afghanistan to India, New Delhi.

Ms. Amina Afzali, Advisor to the President of Afghanistan.

Prof. M. Alem, Dean of Art faculty, Kabul University.

Mr. Omara Khan Massodi, Director of the National Museum, Kabul.

Ms. Frozan Raufi Nabiyar, Secretary, SAF-Afghanistan Advisory Board.

Mr. Rahraw Omarzad, Director, Centre for Contemporary Arts, Kabul.

Ms. Faouzia, Director of Foreign Relation, Kabul.

Mr. Hussain Ali Moin, Director of economical department, Kabul.

Ms. Sara, In-charge of AWWOSM.

Ms. Manizha Tabibzadah, Executive Assistant in AWWOSM.

Ms. Fakhrya, Journalist, Radio Television of Afghanistan.

Mr. Usman, reporter of RTA.

Hon. Dr. H. B. Ghazanfar welcomed the participants and Ambassador Dr. Raheen briefly spoke about SAF activities in Afghanistan. He especially mentioned about Ambassador Madanjeet Singh's generosity in having pledged an amount of a million US dollars to fund Afghanistan's Institute of Cultural heritage, and that it was on his suggestion that first exhibition of Afghanistan's women painters will be held at the Institute.

Hon. Dr. H. B. Ghazanfar, very kindly accepted to inaugurate the exhibition on May 7th 2008. It was decided to invite a number of women Artists from different provinces of Afghanistan, the accommodation for whom in Kabul will be arranged by the Ministry of Women Affairs.

It was also decided that from the works of art exhibited in Kabul, 10 paintings will be selected and dispatched to Srinagar in Kashmir to be included the exhibition of women painters from South Asia.



THE VICIOUS CIRCLE OF VIOLENCE

By Murad Ali Baig

Few people realize just how intoxicating violence can be. The TV screens in every Indian home have shown us the savage joy on the faces of the goons who recently attacked poor non Maharashtrians in Mumbai. It was little different from the faces of the fanatics who had attacked Sikhs, Muslims and other racial or religious minorities in earlier riots. And, when these vandals had the benefit of modern explosives and weapons the impact was devastating. The excitement of shooting tigers or other game is nothing when compared to the blood lust generated by mobs who feel morally justified to kill, wound, rape or loot other people with knives, guns or explosives.

Over the centuries the justification of religion has unfortunately been responsible for more violence than almost any other cause. For many centuries before this, the Jews had suffered brutal pogroms by Christian bigots who blamed the Jews for the betrayal of Jesus and the millions of Jews who perished in the holocaust were mainly condemned for religious reasons. Paradoxically it was only in Muslim countries including Muslim ruled Spain, where they were respected as people of the book that they had been safe and allowed to prosper.

The Crusades, that began a thousand years after the crucifixion, gave a huge impetus to Christian fanaticism and triggered a terrible circle of violence over the centuries. For some 400 years Jews, Muslims and Christians of Byzantium and Spain had lived in reasonable harmony under Muslim protection until the Franks, who were just emerging from the Dark Ages, began the first of the many Holy Wars that was to lead to so much destruction.

The Christian conquest of Jerusalem in July 1099 was marked by the slaughter of over 40,000 Jews and Moslems in two days and the crusaders rode their horses through the Temple of Solomon with blood up to their knees. The second Crusade was mainly instigated by the fiery St. Bernard who tirelessly inflamed all Catholics.

By contrast to this fiery spirit, the capture of Jerusalem by Salahuddin in October 1187 was achieved without shedding a drop of blood and Christians were allowed to stay or to leave with their property. Muslim rulers would routinely release Christian prisoners in exchange for a ransom. In August 1191, Richard, of lion hearted fame, however casually slaughtered 2,700 Muslim prisoners who he had been unable to feed. Saracen rulers always honored their treaties but the Christian knights broke theirs as soon as opportunity allowed on the grounds that there was no sanctity to any pledge made to a heathen.

Muslim kingdoms were however no strangers to bloodshed but they seldom targeted rival religions. Timur Lang in 1381

slaughtered 90,000 mainly Muslim inhabitants of Baghdad so religion was clearly not his object. He, and Nadir Shah later on, killed thousands in Delhi as reprisals for the killing of some of their troops and neither Hindus nor Muslims were spared. The dominant Sunnis killed as many Shia heretics as people of other faiths. According to his flatterers Mahmud of Ghazni not only slaughtered 50,000 Hindus at Somnath but an exactly equal number of Shias in Iran. Aurangzeb's last forty years were not spent fighting Hindus but the apostate Shias of Golconda and Bijapur.

Muslims had ruled Jerusalem peacefully for 800 years until the Turks were ousted in 1917 and Palestine became part of the British Mandate. It was then partly gifted to the new state of Israel in the UN partition of 1947 and fully occupied by Israel after the 6 day war of 1967. This arbitrary creation of Israel by the British and their allies enraged Muslims everywhere and fractured a long history of relative amity between Jews and Muslims. Frustrated Arabs and other Muslims feeling that the western world was implacably against them began to increasingly resort to terrorism. Then Muslim terrorists got a great impetus with the creation of the Taliban by the US and its allies to evict the Soviets. Then the inequitable invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq further angered all Muslims and incited even more terrorism and a new Jihad preached by bigoted Mullahs became a political force. Though the word Jihad is hardly mentioned in the Quran it is mentioned 199 times in the Hadith written 200 years later and still later became used in the sense of a holy war to justify terrorism.

Many in India will not forgive the atrocities attributed to Mahmud Ghazni, Khilji or Aurangzeb or others popularly portrayed with a Quran in one hand and a sword in the other. Few know that all of them employed respected Hindu generals and that Aurangzeb endowed 36 Hindu temples even though he would not allow new ones to be built. The violent slaughter of millions of Hindus and Muslims in 1947 was to however raise communal hatred to new heights.

It is significant that this love of violence justified by religion has usually coincided with poverty and lack of education. It was the illiterate poor of Europe who allowed their bigoted priests to persuade them to needlessly die in the Crusades. It was only when Muslim countries sank into poverty and ignorance with the rise of European nations that their bigoted Mullahs could rouse the masses to violence. Today it is among the uneducated poor of India that the bigoted find such eager volunteers to torch and murder those of other persuasions. Tragically evil things are never done with such righteous pride and such joyous glee as when they are done in the name of religion.



Looking Back

Raju G. C. (Nepal)
Assisting Teacher,
Beaconhouse National University, Lahore.

As an introspection, I am myself surprised to see how I have transformed since joining the Beaconhouse National University (BNU) in 2003. The BNU is situated in Lahore, Pakistan. My transformation after studying art under the Ambassador Madanjeet Singh scholarship at BNU is analogical to the Zen anecdote that I came across earlier. “Before studying Zen, trees are trees and mountains are mountains. While studying Zen, things become confused. After studying Zen, trees are still trees and mountains are still mountains. Then one would perhaps wonder, “What is the difference between before and after?” Well, there is no difference, only the feet are a little bit off the ground. The large part of the credit for lifting my feet a little bit off the ground goes to my teachers who always encouraged us to think critically, question and learn; and importantly to “unlearn”. It is what has shaped my ‘educational upbringing’ at BNU.

I feel proud in saying that we had an exciting, challenging and a ground breaking academic environment at BNU. We are highly



Raju G.C.
Title: Oil on Canvas
Medium: Acrylic and Pastel on canvas
Year: 2007



Prof. Salima Hashmi talking to her students at the BNU, Lahore.

obliged to Ambassador Madanjeet Singh, Founder of SAF, and Mrs. Salima Hashmi, without whom the educational milieu, hospitality and multi- cultural experiences we have had would remain simply a far fetched dream.

When I recall the year 2003, I retain a moment in which I felt delighted, enthusiastic and even adventurous! That year brought about a ray of new hope, dynamism and optimism that were to colour the rest of my life! It was the year when I was selected as one of the students from Nepal to study at the BNU under SAF Scholarship. Two students from each member country of SAARC were to represent his / her nation. It has been four and half years since then. I graduated in June 2007 with distinction. I stood first position in Fine Arts Department (batch 2003 -2007) and was awarded with a Gold Medal. I feel proud and contended for being able to prove the trust I was entrusted with. I am currently doing my Post Graduate Studies in Art Education and also working as an Assisting Teacher at BNU.

I have special memories attached to the place I teach. It is familiar and intimate. Even these days, I go to the same classes and premises that I used to go as a student. This is the space where I prepared myself to be a ‘good learner’. And that’s where I teach my students now.

Besides teaching, I have been working as an artist and participating in different exhibitions thanks to the wide contacts of the BNU. Recently I was a part of VASL Artists’ Residency, Taaza Tareen III at Karachi. It was a month long from 6th January – 6th February, 2008 and was a remarkable experience to share space, interact, and work together with other five other emerging young artists.

SAF-Madanjeet Singh scholarship and four years’ of study/stay in Pakistan did a lot to shape my thoughts, beliefs and vision. Delights, surprises and ‘shocks’ came in different packets and assemblages. All the processes bestowed us with the prospect to better mould ourselves.



Best Parliamentarian Award to Hon'ble Mani Shankar Aiyer



At the award giving ceremony at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, the photo shows (left to right) Dr Manmohan Singh, the Prime Minister of India, Mr Hamid Ansari, the Vice President of India, Shrimati Pratibha Patil handing over the award, and Mr Mani Shankar Aiyer.

On behalf of the Indian parliamentary group, the president of India, Shrimati Pratibha Patil, handed over the citation for the Outstanding Parliamentarian Award for the year 2006, to Mani Shankar Aiyer, Union Minister for Panchayati Raj, Youth and Sports. Mr Aiyer is also the chairman of the India chapter of South Asia Foundation. The award was bestowed in the presence of Dr Manmohan Singh, the Prime Minister of India, Mr Hamid Ansari, the Vice President of India and Mr Somnath Chatterjee, the speaker of the lower house of the Indian Parliament.

The award citation goes on to say "A staunch secularist and a firm believer of women's empowerment, Shri Mani Shankar Aiyer has been vociferous in expressing his views to strengthen the democratic roots of our nation. With his unflinching faith in development through democracy at grass roots level, Shri Aiyer worked for providing constitutional backing to the institution of Panchayats. He has a passionate belief in the emergence of Panchayats as creative instruments for the transformation of rural India. His tenacity and quest for learning and hard work have brought in excellence in all spheres of his work".

6th SAF Scout Friendship Camp to be held in Bangladesh

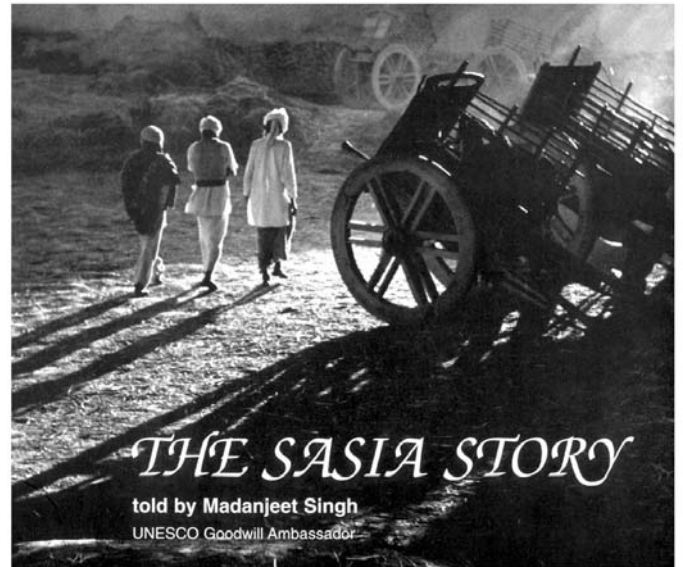
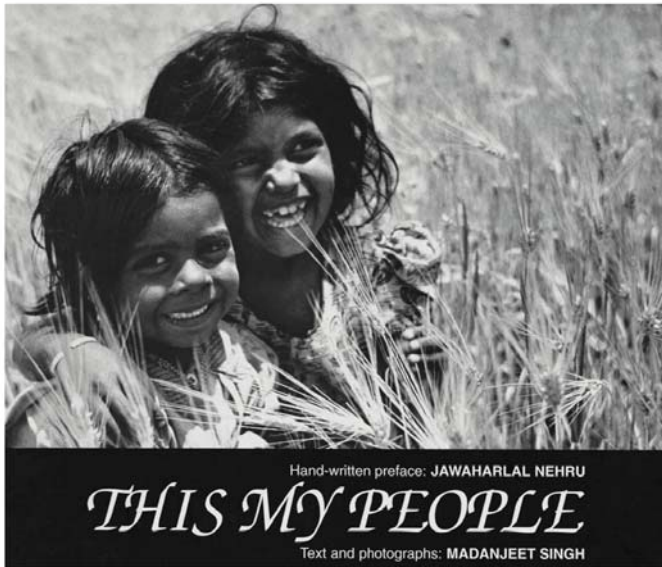
It has been learnt that the 6th SAF Scout Friendship Camp will be held on 12-18 October 2008 in Mouchak, Gazipur, Bangladesh. According to Abdullah Rasheed, Asia Pacific Regional Director of the Scouts, all National Scout Organizations will receive the same amount of subsidy provided by SAF as in the previous years; the participant must be between 16-25 years old and each contingent must have an equal number of girls and boys plus two adult leaders, one male, one female. The Scout Friendship camps have been held successfully in various SAARC cities in the past and have contributed in promoting harmony and goodwill among the youths of the region.

All Aboard!

After months of discussion-and four decades of waiting - the Maitree (friendship) Express finally chugged across the India-Bangladesh border on April 14, the first day of the Bengali new year. In fact, two Expresses were in order for the celebrations, with one leaving from Dhaka and the other from Calcutta, simultaneously. Although crossborder buses began running a decade so ago, the Maitree is the first crossborder rail connection since 1965. The anticipation was evidently worth it. The demand for tickets was so high that Bangladeshi authorities were forced to add an additional car to the train, to accommodate eager passengers. As a result, 80 more people, in addition to the 418 in the regular cars, made the journey to Calcutta. (Its Indian counterpart only had a small contingent for its maiden run, though this will soon change).

courtesy: Himal South Asian May 2008.

For Querries and Comments please contact:
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In 1949, shortly after India's partition, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru handwrote the Preface to *This My People* — later published worldwide (1989) in several languages. 'An astonishing book of photographs..... his is a mental journey through the India he loves deeply', wrote Souren Melikian, the eminent art critic of *The International Herald Tribune*. The famous film producer Ismail Merchant praised 'the aesthetic merits and historical value of the book' in a full-page review in *The New York Times*. Prime Minister Nehru also wrote the Preface to *INDIA, Paintings from Ajanta Caves* (1954) and stated: 'I welcome this production and congratulate not only UNESCO but my young colleague, Madanjeet Singh, who has brought his ability and labour to the performance of this task.'

Over half a century and a score of books later, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh wrote the introduction to Madanjeet Singh's latest book, *The Sasia Story* (2005). It is a poignant and riveting saga of the traumatic communal conflicts that the author witnessed in the aftermath of Partition and which shaped his lifelong commitment to secular ideals and regional cooperation. He strongly believes that in today's fast-moving and ultra-competitive world no country can survive unilaterally. 'Sasia' is a name he has coined for South Asia's common currency in the hope that, like the Euro, it will become an anchor of economic stability, peace and prosperity. Nobel Peace Prize laureate Desmond Tutu describes *The Sasia Story* as 'a splendid tribute to the people of the region and to the author'.

First published by UNESCO in English, French and Spanish in cooperation with the European Commission and South Asia Foundation, *The Sasia Story* is translated into 24 South Asian languages and published in English by Penguin (India).

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